



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**Testimony in support of SB 990
Senate Judiciary Committee
September 30, 2014**

Chair Jones and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Michigan members and constituents of the Humane Society of the United States, I would like to express strong support for SB 990 to ensure that dogs rescued from dogfighting operations will have an opportunity to get a second chance at a good life.

In response to a high number of dogfighting incidents around the state, this legislature enacted one of the best dogfighting laws in the nation in 2012. Not only is dogfighting a felony, but the crime carries with it the risk of property forfeiture. Dogfighting is also a predicate offense in our state's RICO statute. There is no question that this legislature, and indeed nearly all Michiganders, are concerned about the blood sport of dogfighting and want to see the dogs spared from such a cruel fate.

In the past, all dogs seized during dogfighting raids were euthanized. I use the word "seized" deliberately as it is difficult to use the word "rescue" when the dogs' ultimate fate is death. In recent years, organizations like ours have abolished outdated policies that called for the euthanasia of dogs confiscated in dogfighting raids. Our official policy calls on agencies to assess each dog individually so as to determine which dogs would be good candidates for adoption into loving homes. Through our own work with law enforcement agencies we have found that upwards of 75% of the dogs taken in dogfighting raids are in fact behaviorally sound and are quite capable of being adopted into a good home and living a good life.

There has been some confusion as to exactly what Michigan law mandates agencies do with these dogs. SB 990 would remove any ambiguity and allow for adoptable dogs to be adopted out. It is unfair, and frankly wrongheaded, to assume every dog taken in a dogfighting raid is a vicious killer that needs to be put down. More often than not this caricature of these dogs is flat out wrong.

I encourage the committee to support SB 990 and to help this bill move quickly through the Legislature.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jill Fritz
Michigan Senior State Director
The Humane Society of the United States
jfritz@humanesociety.org
(517) 515-3839